

9 June 2021

Submission to NSW Department of Planning Industry and Environment ~~OPPOSING~~ THE HUNTER POWER PROJECT (Kurri Kurri Power Station)

I am a businesswoman, former lawyer and mother of two teenagers. I want to ensure that my children inherit a natural environment and way of life that they and future generations can enjoy.

I am writing to oppose the plan for construction and operation of a 750 MW gas fired power station and ancillary infrastructure.

I have outlined below 4 reasons why this plan is not the best approach for NSW. Particularly when the plans is considered within the context of the urgent need for Australia to decarbonize to protect our future and that of future generations, it makes no sense.

1. We need urgent action to decarbonize

The scientific consensus is clear. The world's leading climate scientists stated in the 2018 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ¹ that between now and 2030, rapid and far-reaching action is needed to limit warming to 1.5°C and thereby avoid the worst impacts of warming. Warming beyond 1.5°C (even by half a degree) will increase the likelihood and severity of storms, floods, drought, extreme heat, bushfires and poverty, with calamitous results for hundreds of millions of people. Most concerning is the fact that if certain tipping points are reached, this could cause the melting of the polar ice caps and the thawing of permafrost – and the end of a world that can sustain our species.

To limit global warming to 1.5°C would require human caused emissions of CO₂ to fall by about 45% from 2010 levels by 2030 and reach 'net zero' by 2050. The Federal Government's response to the COVID-19 crisis was so successful because it listened to the scientific consensus. We need the Government to listen to the scientific consensus on the urgent need to decarbonise. We owe it to our children and future generations to ensure that the leaders and voters of this generation do all that we can to achieve the necessary reductions.

We are already experiencing the effects of global warming through the extreme weather events that have been occurring with increasing frequency. In particular, last year opened with Australia experiencing the increase in extreme fire weather that was forecast a decade ago.

This project is incompatible with the targets which the NSW Government has set to decarbonize. It also fails to take account of the recent finding in

¹ IPCC Special Report, "Global Warming of 1.5°C - <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

Sharrma v Minister for Environment which establishes a clear link between fossil fuel projects and climate change harms and a duty of care to protect young people from these foreseeable future harms.

2. Gas is a fossil fuel – investing in it does not make sense given the urgent need to decarbonise

“Natural gas” is a fossil fuel and greenhouse gas that is at least as bad as coal in terms of its impact on global heating when used for electricity generation, due to the combined impacts of its combustion (which releases carbon dioxide) and system-wide leaks and venting of methane (which is 86 times more harmful than carbon dioxide over a 20 year period).²

It does not make sense to invest in more gas when we need to be focused on decarbonising as quickly as possible to maximise the chances of Australia and the world limiting global warming

3. Our energy grid does not need more gas

Gas is too expensive and emissions-intensive to be considered part of the climate transition. Even the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) has confirmed that **we do not need more gas in order to transition to a renewables-dominated grid**. The baseload storage that we need can come at lower financial and climate cost from batteries and hydro, as well as by sharing energy across the grid.

4. Instead we should invest in renewables for energy requirements

Our tax dollars should be invested in the most economically sensible way. I do not want my tax dollars invested in gas. The gas industry is one of the least jobs intensive in Australia.³ A number of research papers show that there are significant opportunities for Australia if we lead in climate action. By leveraging our advantages in renewable energy sources, Beyond Zero Emissions has set out a plan for how Australia can create one million jobs.⁴

Research by Oxford University’s Smith School of Enterprise and of the Environment published in May 2020 found that stimulus spending on new green energy projects creates twice as many jobs per dollar than investments in fossil fuel projects.⁵

I urge the Department to reject the Kurri Kirri gas plan on climate grounds.

Yours sincerely

Suzy Bessell

² <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-bad-of-a-greenhouse-gas-is-methane/>

³ <https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/the-myth-of-australias-gas-supply-shortage/>

⁴ <https://millionjobs.org.au>

⁵ <https://www.smithschool.ox.ac.uk/publications/wpapers/workingpaper20-02.pdf>